

[Courting and Dancing]

W1225

Beliefs & Customs - Folkstuff

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Form [md]3 Folklore Collection (or Type)

Title Courting and dancing

Place of origin Portland, Oregon Date 2/6/39

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks L

Form A

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Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date February 6, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Courting and Dancing.

Name and address of informant Mrs. John H. James 2105 46 Avenue, Portland, Oregon.

Date and time of interview February 2, 1939 1:30 to 3:00 p. m.

Place of interview Above address, home of informant.

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Mrs. Truchot, Oswego, Oregon

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you —

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

A pleasantly furnished living room, bright and cheerful, though something in the manner of the early Nineties. A two-story house of about eight large rooms, with high ceilings, and a verandah running along the front; the house facing east. The regulation 50 x 100 city lot, upon which the house rests, has the typical small front lawn, with shrubbery and flowers at the sides and back.

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Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
7. Special skills and interests

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8. Community and religious activities

9. Description of informant

10. Other points gained in interview

1. English.

2. Portland, Oregon, February 25, 1859.

3. Father, Josiah S. Dickinson; Mother, Martha Ann King. Husband, John H.; Daughters, Mona, Jane and Mrs. Marian Forsythe.

4. Portland, Oregon, from birth to present date.

5. Taught at home by father.

6. Housewife most of life. Public stenographer and teacher. In 1889, '91, '93 and '95, clerk of State Senate.

7. No special skill in anything. Interested in most things.

8. Church work. Member of Methodist church since 1876.

9. Handsome, white-haired and jolly. Looks nearer 65 than approaching 80. Well-dressed and well-groomed. A person who looks as if she had enjoyed life, and still does.

10. Keenly interested in this folklore work.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

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Text:

So that [soalawag?] of a brother of mine has been talking too much again. No, he didn't send you to me? It was Mrs. Truchot of Oswego? Well, he is responsible. He told her that I might have something to tell, but I think he told you everything I know of pioneer days. He's full of stories and likes to tell them.

Will, living is certainly a lot easier than it was when I was young. There were ten in our family, nine girls and one boys and we had, besides, a half brother, John. For one thing, in the summer, when our spring-well went dry, we had to drag water for a quarter of a mile on a wooden sled, bringing two or three kegs at a time. I tell you, the first time I simply turned a tap and all the water I wanted, hot or cold, ran out, it seemed like the very acme of luxury. No moderately well-to-do homes had nice, comfortable over-stuffed furniture when I was a girl. How well I recall that when we girls had young man callers it was a gamble as to who would come first to occupy the two spare chairs, and all the light we had was a little kerosene lamp — one of those funny looking little things, with a handle on one

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side of the bowl, that are treasured as antiques nowadays. Well, I suppose light wasn't any more essential, 2 or any more popular, in courting them than it is now.

Did brother Charlie tell you about how our half-brother John's girl, up from California, got him to spruce up and take dancing lessons? He did, well I bet he didn't tell you what a rag-a-muffin the old dancing teacher, Cardinell, was. That was in 1868 or 1870, and old Charlie Cardinell would go around over the country in a little old wagon, drawn by one horse, picking up every cast-off thing he could find. My! My! but he looked like an old beggar! But he could certainly dance, and what with teaching everybody in town to dance, and gathering up every old rag and bottle and stuff like that, and selling it for a few cents, he died pretty well off, owning all of Cardinell Hill, up on the Canyon Road.

Of course we went to all the revival meetings in those early days, but I don't remember much in particular about them. I remember when the old tabernacle was built in the early '80s, at 12th and Taylor streets. It was built for a series of meetings conducted by the revivalist, Mrs. Hanson, and she was a wonder. I guess she drew the biggest crowds Portland had up to that time. The tabernacle was packed every night, and nearly everybody in town got religion. Later on the tabernacle was moved to 12th and Morrison streets. B. Fay Mills, Chapman, Billy Sunday, and all the big evangelists held meetings there.

I wish I had something more to tell, but that is just about all I can think of, and it doesn't seem very important.

Form D

Extra Comment

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Comment:

Mrs. James was rather disappointing as an informant, her brother, Mr. Dickinson (see Dickinson interview), having given about all the data that was of much consequence in their history.